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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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Mahabharata - 21

Arjuna in Indraloka

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Singen

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MAHABHARATA

Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

The twentieth session of our rendering of Vaishampayana's recital of Vyasa's epic, the Mahabharata, described how Arjuna, helped by his knowledge of the secret art of 'Pratismriti' (a branch of yogic knowledge) and his penance, pleased Indra, Shiva and other gods and acquired celestial weapons from them. The session ended with Indra instructing Arjuna to proceed to Swargaloka to perform some duties for the devas. Indra asked him to await Matali who would take him there in the celestial chariot.

*

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Mahabharata – 21

ARJUNA IN INDRALOKA

HAVING ACQUIRED, O MONARCH, THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS FROM SHIVA AND THE LOKAPALAS, ARJUNA AWAITED THE GREAT VEHICLE OF LORD INDRA.

"JUST THEN THE VEHICLE GUIDED BY MATALI CAME THROUGH THE CLOUDS, ILLUMINATING THE HEAVENS.

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"AND AS ARJUNA WAS THINKING ABOUT THE VEHICLE, MATALI DESCENDED FROM IT AND ADDRESSED HIM THUS —

O FORTUNATE SON OF INDRA*, ASCEND THE VEHICLE SENT FOR YOU BY INDRA, WITHOUT LOSS OF TIME.

YOUR FATHER INDRA, THE LORD OF THE CELESTIALS, HAS COMMANDED ME TO TAKE YOU TO HIM.

THE LORD HIMSELF, SURROUNDED BY RISHIS, GANDHARVAS AND APSARAS OF INDRALOKA, IS WAITING TO BEHOLD YOU.

YOU WILL RETURN AFTER OBTAINING THE WEAPONS YOU SEEK.

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* ARJUNA WAS BORN WITH THE BLESSING OF INDRA.

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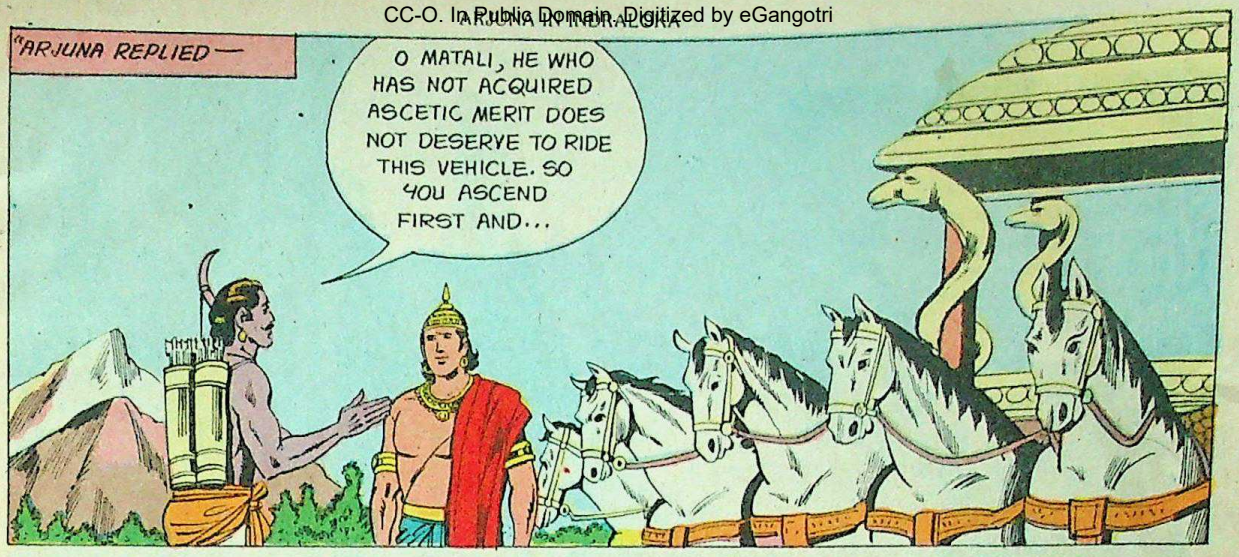

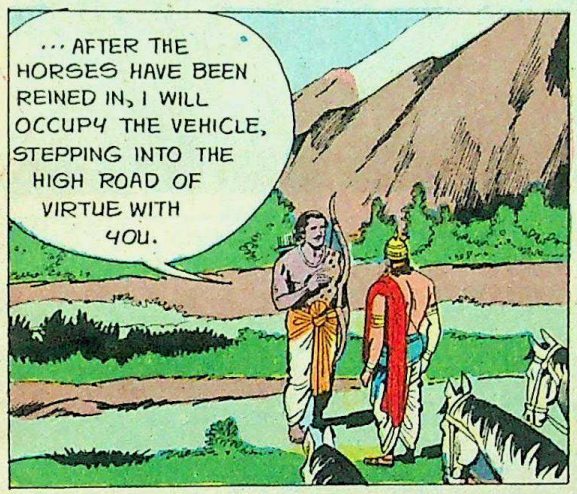

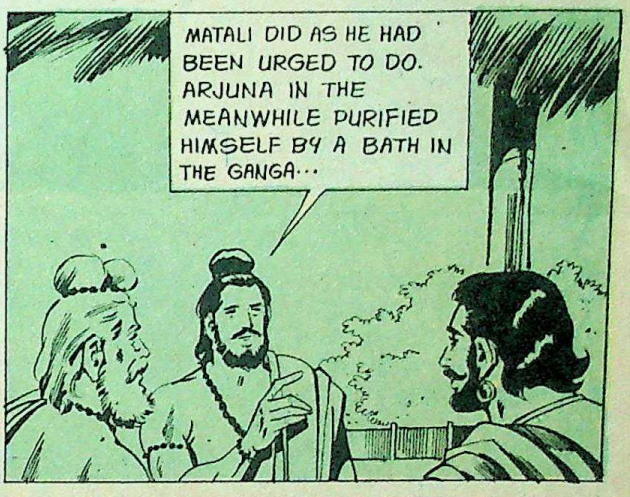

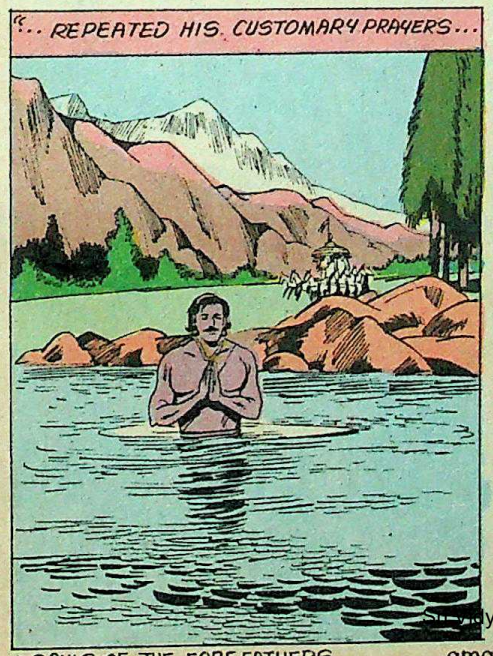

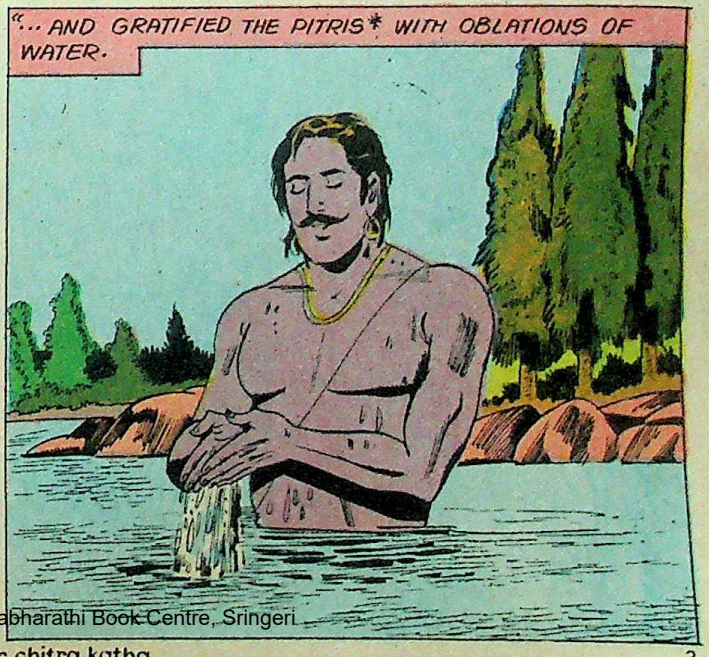

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* SOULS OF THE FORE FATHERS

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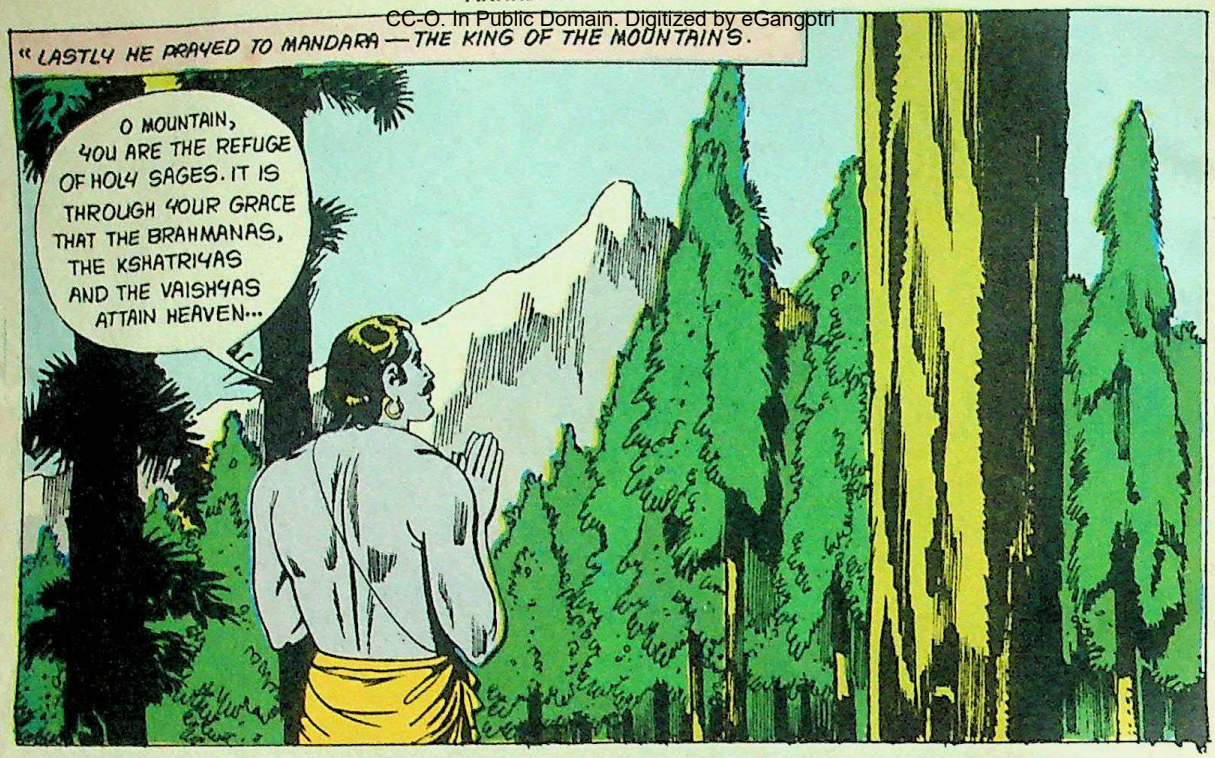

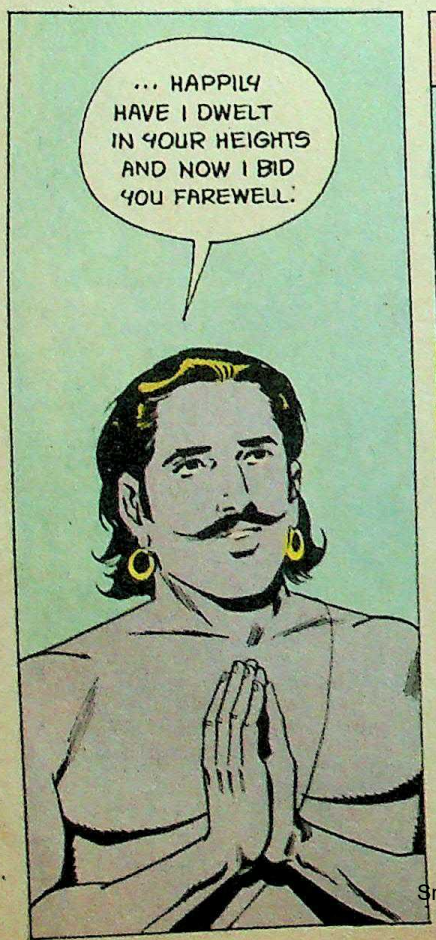

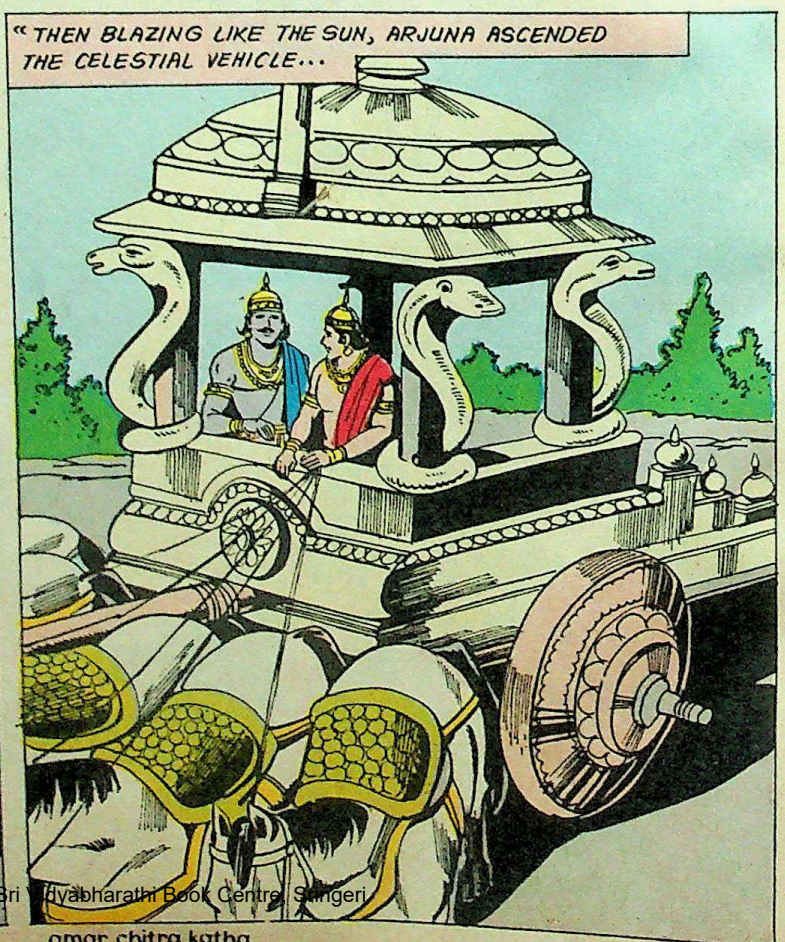

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*CELESTIAL MUSICIANS OR SINGERS +FOLLOWERS OF KUBERA.

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ARJUNA WAS FILLED WITH WONDER AND ASKED MATALI TO SPEAK TO HIM ABOUT THE HEAVENLY BEINGS.

"MATALI GLADLY REPLIED—

THESE, O SON OF KUNTI, ARE VIRTUOUS PERSONS, STATIONED IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PLACES. IT IS THESE WHOM YOU HAVE SEEN AS STARS FROM THE EARTH.

"AND FINALLY ARJUNA BEHELD AMARAVATI — THE CITY OF INDRA. IT WAS THE REGION OF THE VIRTUOUS ALONE, ADORNED WITH FLOWERS OF EVERY SEASON AND SACRED TREES OF ALL KINDS.

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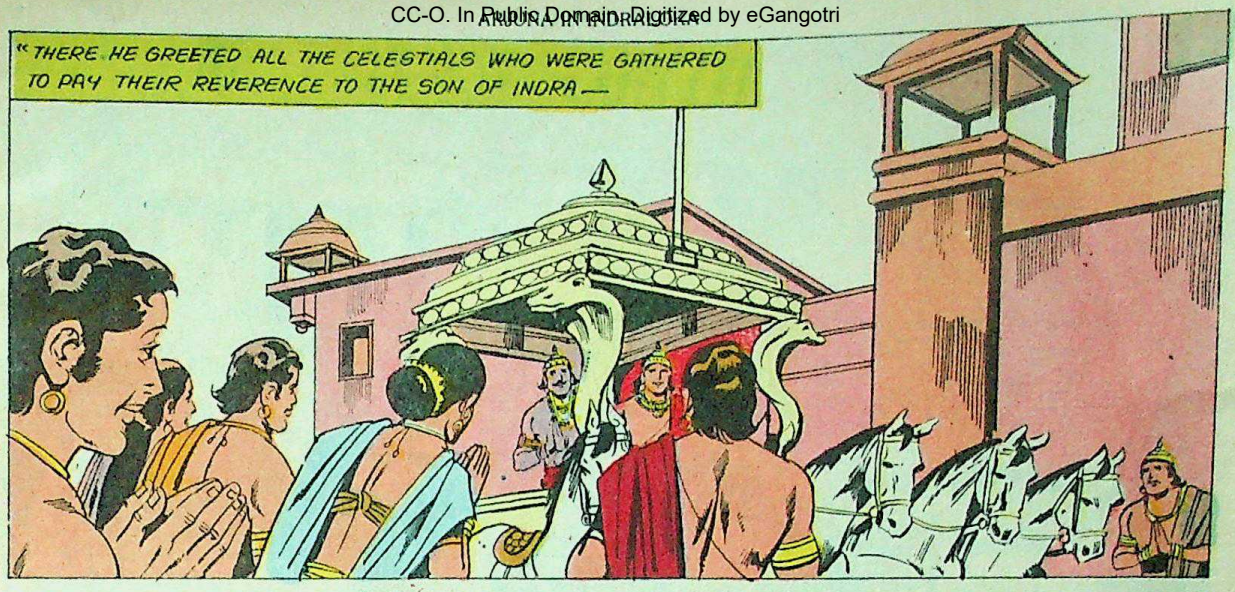

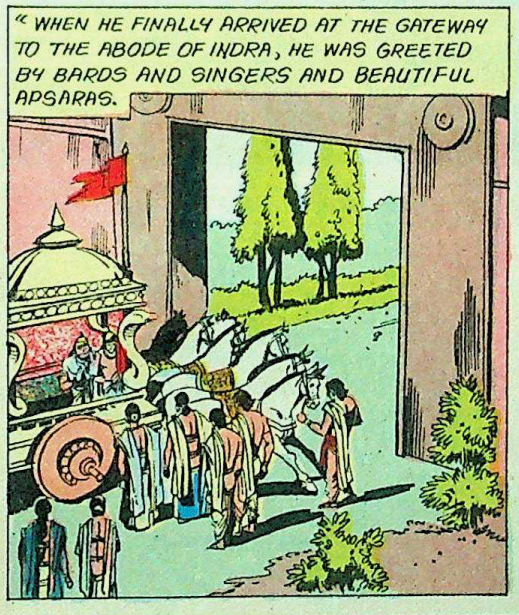

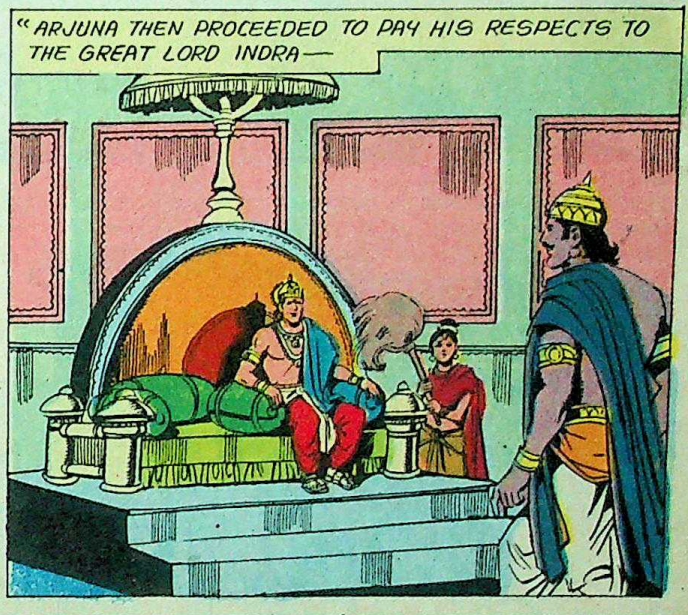

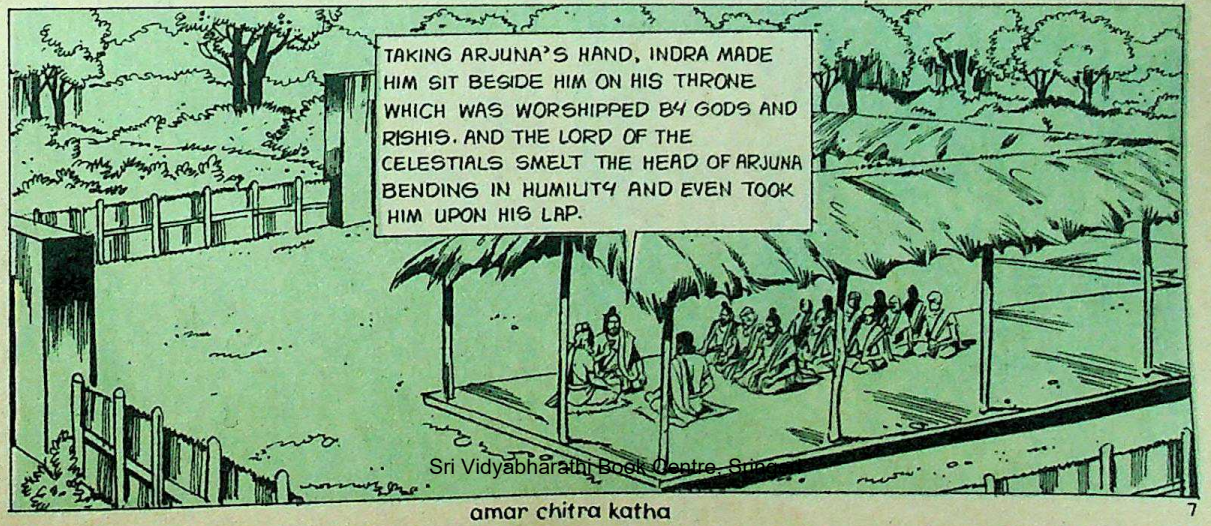

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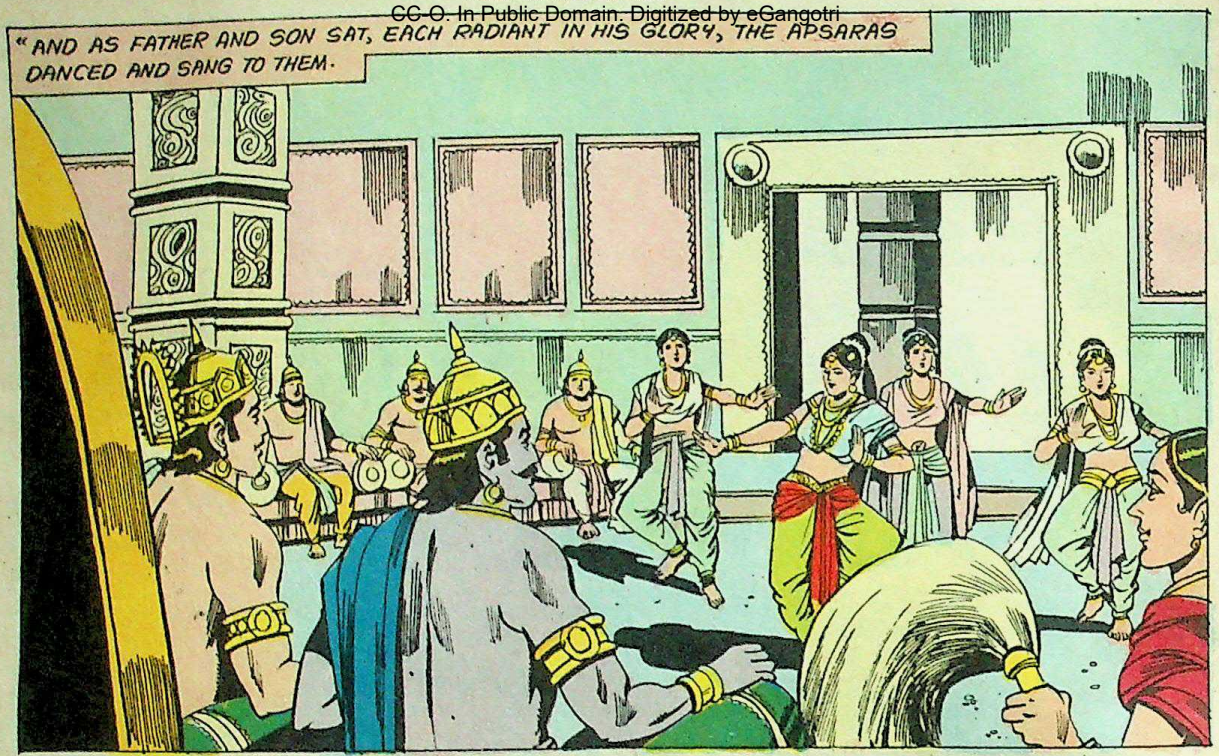

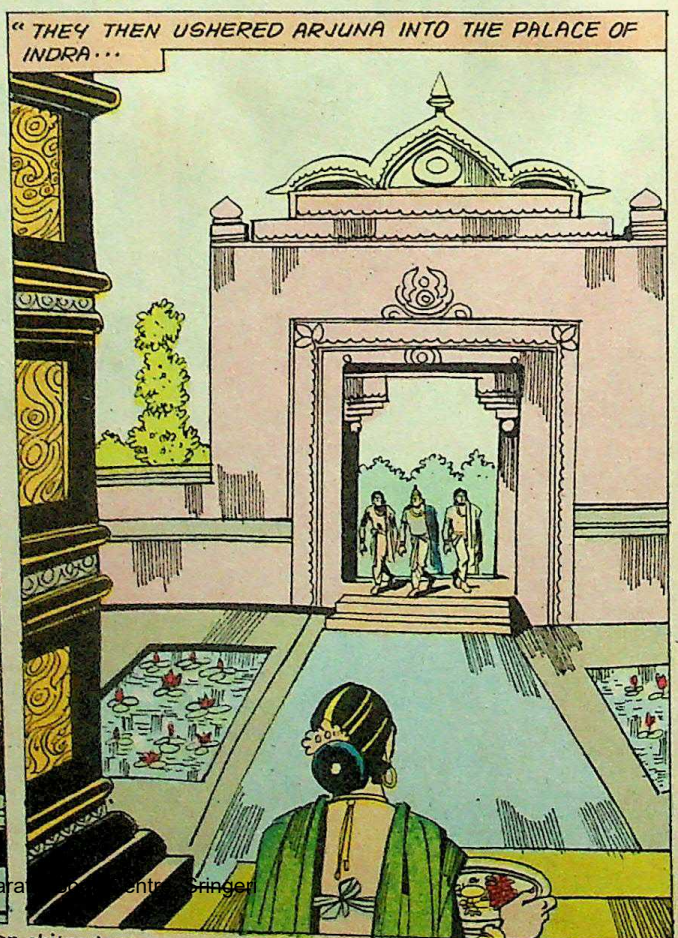

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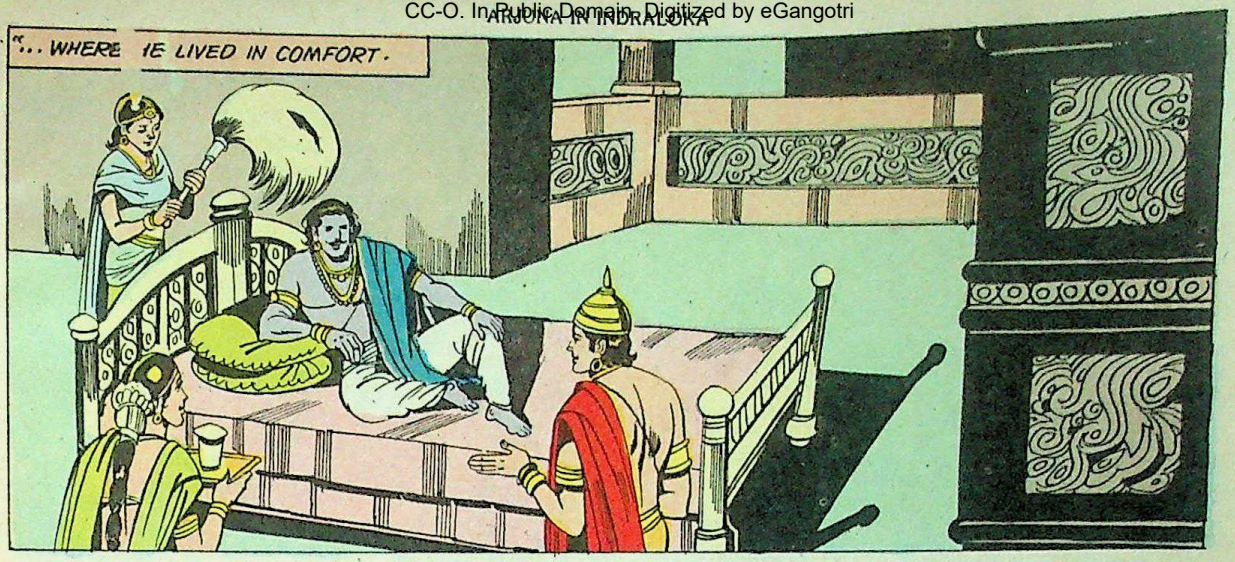

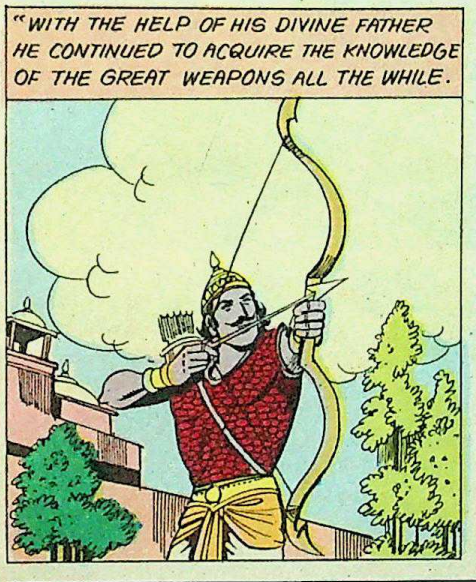

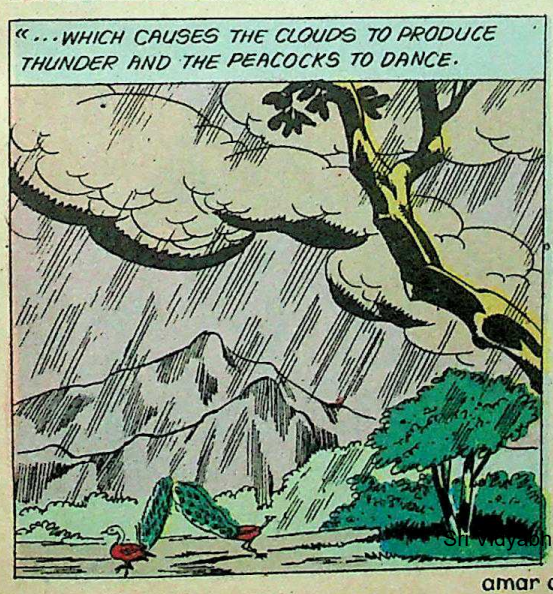

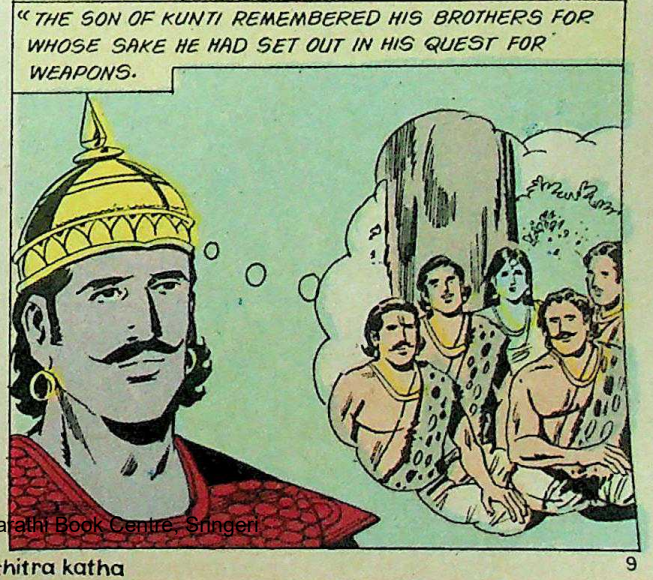

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BUT AT THE BEHEST OF INDRA HE LIVED FOR FULL FIVE YEARS IN HEAVEN, SURROUNDED BY EVERY COMFORT AND LUXURY.

"THEN ONE DAY INDRA ADDRESSED ARJUNA.

O SON OF KUNTI, LEARN THE ART OF MUSIC AND DANCING FROM CHITRASENA. THIS MUSIC OF THE CELESTIALS DOES NOT EXIST IN THE WORLD OF MEN, BUT YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM IT.

"SO ARJUNA, UNDER THE EXPERT GUIDANCE OF CHITRASENA, MASTERED THE CELESTIAL ARTS OF DANCE AND MUSIC...*

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* THIS KNOWLEDGE LATER HELPED ARJUNA WHILE IN DISGUISE.

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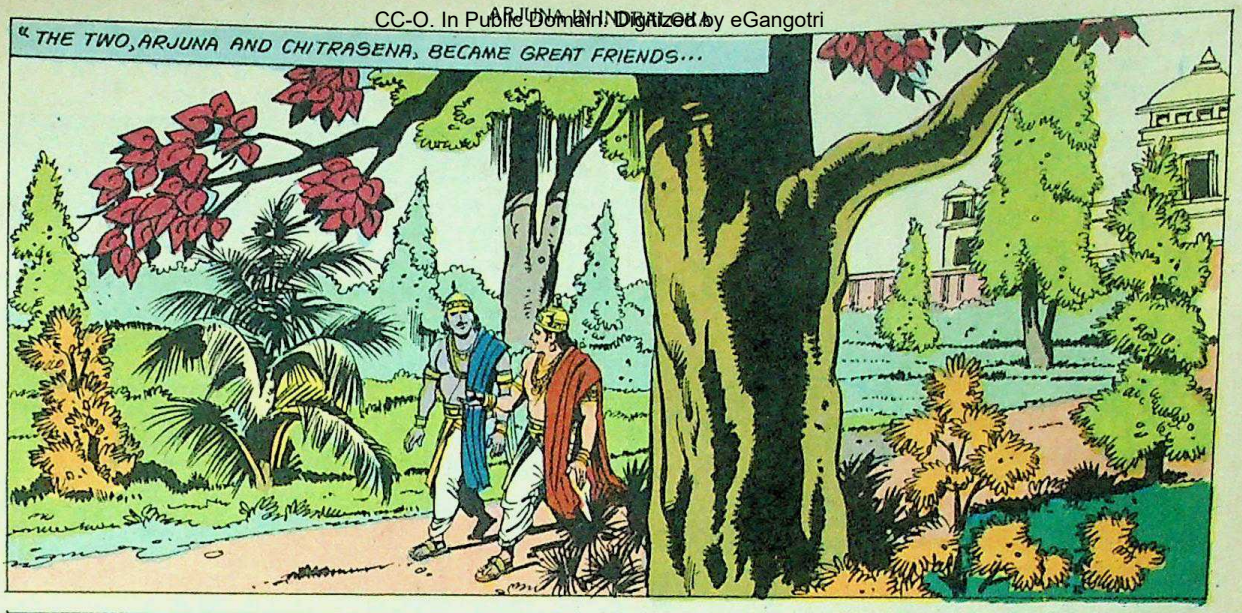

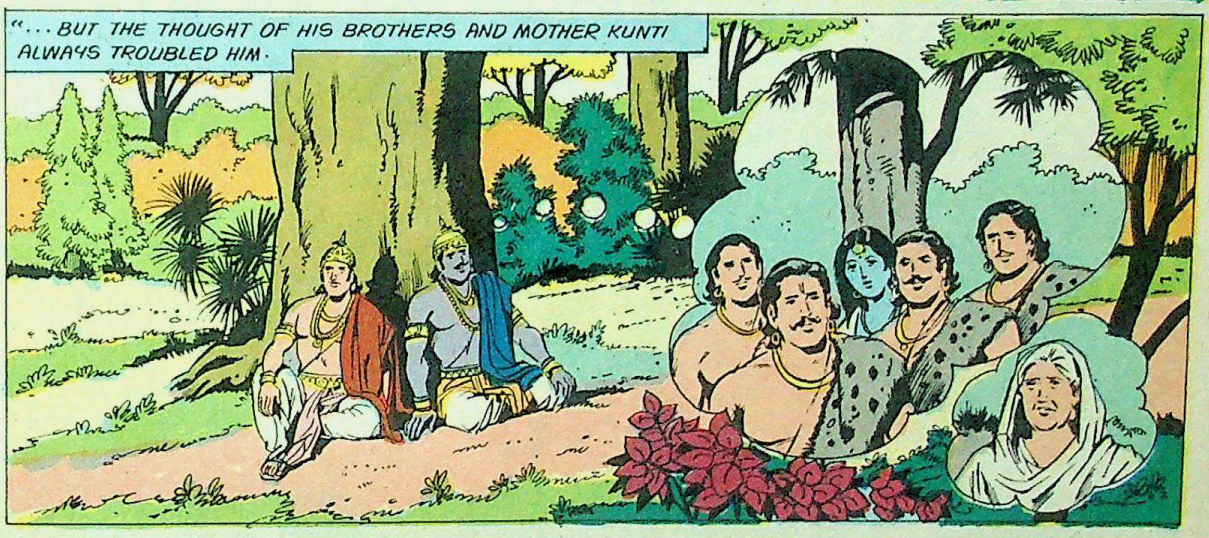

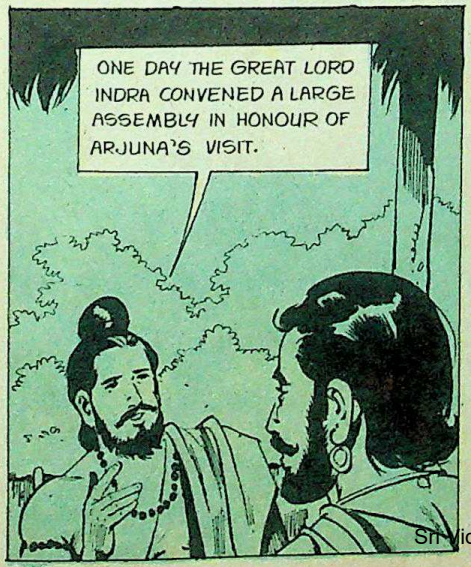

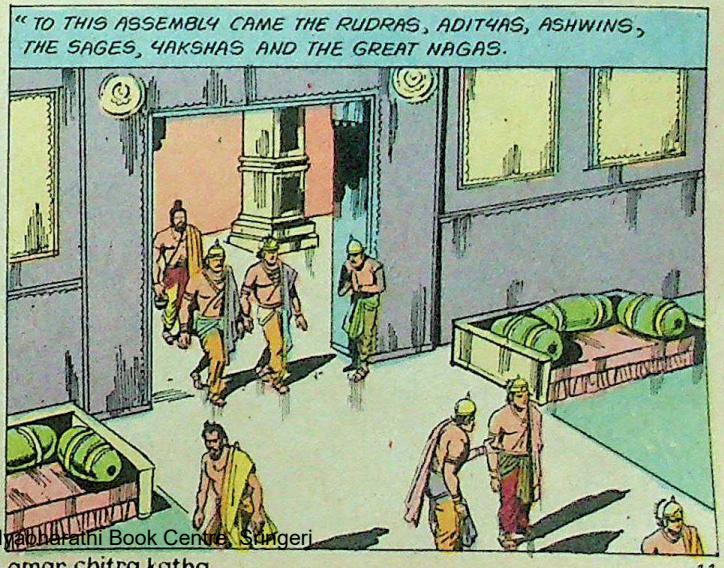

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"THE ILLUSTRIOUS MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY THEN TOOK THEIR SEATS ACCORDING TO THEIR RANK AND STATUS.

"THEN THE GANDHARVAS BEGAN TO PLUCK THE STRINGS OF THEIR VEENAS AND SING CHARMING SONGS OF CELESTIAL MELODY. THE APSARAS BEGAN TO DANCE.

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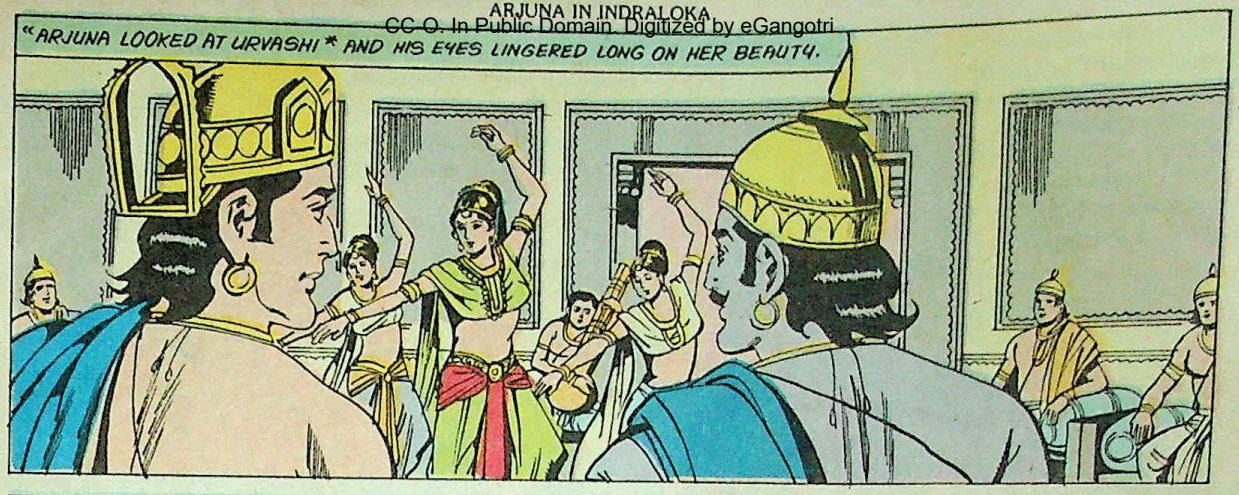

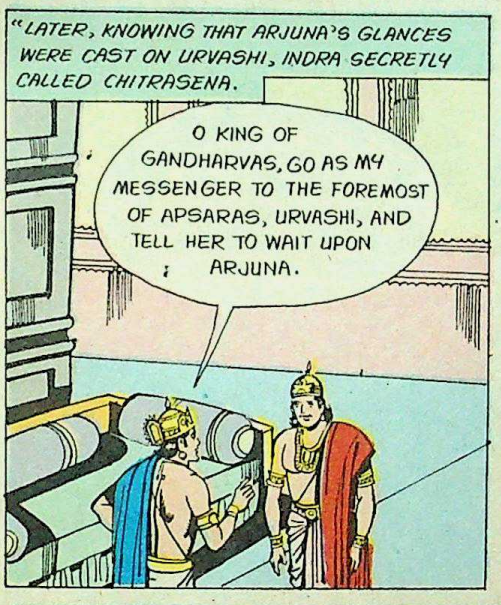

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* A CELESTIAL MAIDEN.

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YOU KNOW HIM OF WHOM I HAVE COME TO SPEAK TO YOU. HE IS FAMED FOR HIS GRACEFULNESS, HIS NOBLE CONDUCT, VALOUR, INTELLIGENCE AND UNSURPASSED STRENGTH.

ARJUNA, BY VIRTUE OF HIS DEVOTIONS, HIS LINEAGE AND HIS VARIOUS SKILLS IS CAPABLE OF PROTECTING OUR CELESTIAL REGIONS. HE IS EQUAL EVEN TO INDRA.

IT IS FOR HIS SAKE, O FAIR MAIDEN, THAT OUR LORD INDRA WANTS YOUR ASSISTANCE. LET THE HERO BE MADE TO PARTAKE OF THE DELIGHTS OF HEAVEN AT YOUR FEET.

"URVASHI, INCOMPARABLY BEAUTIFUL, SMILED AND WITH A GLAD HEART SHE ANSWERED—

IN OBEDIENCE TO INDRA, OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOU AND MOVED BY THE SPLENDOUR OF THE VIRTUES OF ARJUNA, I ACCEPT HIM AS MY BELOVED. KAMADEVA* HAS CAST HIS SPELL ON ME.

URVASHI OF RAPTUROUS SMILES, SENT AWAY CHITRASENA AND PREPARED HERSELF TO VISIT ARJUNA.

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* THE GOD OF LOVE.

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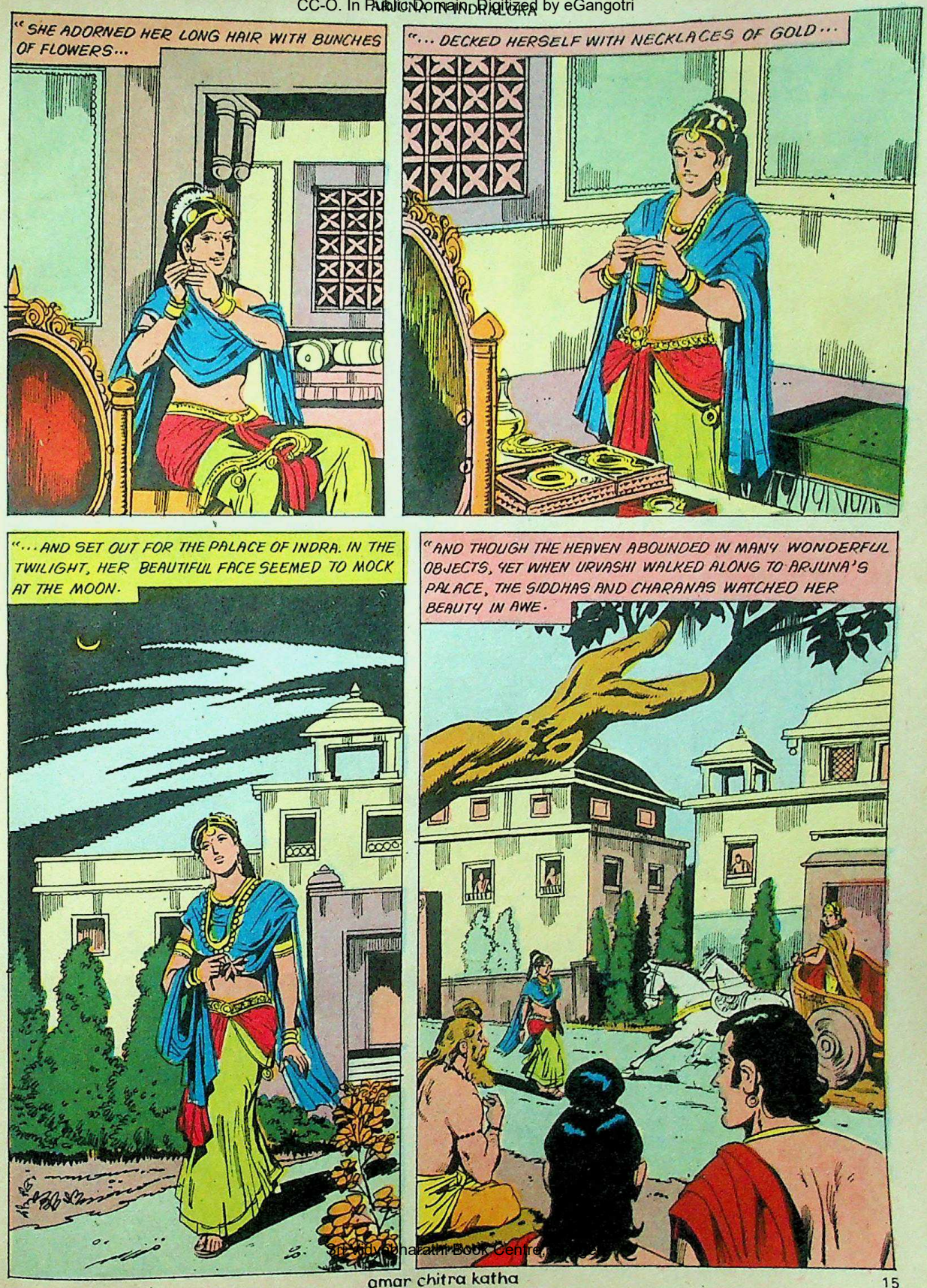

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"AT THE GATE OF ARJUNA'S ABODE, SHE SENT WORD TO HIM THROUGH THE ATTENDANT.

"WHEN THE ATTENDANT RETURNED—

YOU MAY ENTER, O FAIR APSARA.

"SO SHE ENTERED THE PALACE OF ARJUNA.

BUT, UPON BEHOLDING HER AT NIGHT IN HIS MANSION, ARJUNA, WITH AN ANXIOUS HEART GOT UP TO RECEIVE HER WITH RESPECT AND CLOSED HIS EYES OUT OF MODESTY.

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"ARJUNA SALUTED HER IN THE MANNER AN ELDER IS SALUTED AND OFFERED HER WORSHIP.

O FOREMOST OF APSARAS, I BOW TO YOU IN REVERENCE. COMMAND ME AND I SHALL WAIT UPON YOU AS A SERVANT.

HEARING ARJUNA SPEAKING THUS, O MONARCH, URVASHI FLEW INTO A RAGE. SHE THEN EXPLAINED TO HIM WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED BETWEEN HER AND CHITRASENA.

CHITRASENA CAME TO ME AT THE BEHEST OF LORD INDRA, WITH A COMMAND FOR ME TO WAIT UPON YOU.

THUS COMMANDED BY YOUR FATHER AND IMPELLED BY KAMADEVA I WISH TO SERVE YOU.

"HEARING HER SPEAK IN THIS MANNER, ARJUNA WAS OVERCOME WITH EMBARRASSMENT. SHUTTING HIS EARS WITH HIS HANDS HE SAID —

O BLESSED LADY, IT CAUSES ME GREAT UNHAPPINESS TO HEAR SUCH WORDS FROM YOU.

YOU ARE WORTHY OF BEING THE WIFE OF SOMEONE SUPERIOR. I RESPECT YOU LIKE MY MOTHER KUNTI OR SHACHI THE QUEEN OF INDRA.

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IT IS TRUE THAT I GAZED AT YOU WITH MY EYES BIG WITH DELIGHT. BUT IT WAS ONLY WITH THE THOUGHT, 'EVEN THIS GRACEFUL LADY IS THE MOTHER OF THE KAURAVA RACE'*.

"HEARING THIS, URVASHI SAID:

O SON OF INDRA, WE APSARAS ARE APPOINTED TO GIVE PLEASURE TO ALL. DO NOT THEREFORE ELEVATE ME TO THE STATUS OF A SUPERIOR.

THE SONS AND GRANDSONS OF PURU'S RACE, WHO HAVE COME HERE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR ASCETIC MERIT, HAVE ACCEPTED OUR SERVICES WITHOUT INCURRING ANY SIN.

SO, O LORD, DO NOT SEND ME AWAY. ALLOW ME TO BE DEVOTED TO YOU.

"ARJUNA REPLIED:

BEAUTIFUL LADY, MAY THE LORDS OF THE FOUR CARDINAL POINTS AND THE POINTS BETWEEN THEM LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY...

I BOW MY HEAD AND PROSTRATE MYSELF AT YOUR FEET FOR YOU DESERVE TO BE WORSHIPPED AS MY MOTHER* AND IT IS YOUR DUTY TO PROTECT ME AS YOUR SON.

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* URVASHI WAS THE WIFE OF PURURAVA, AN ANCESTOR OF THE KAURAVAS

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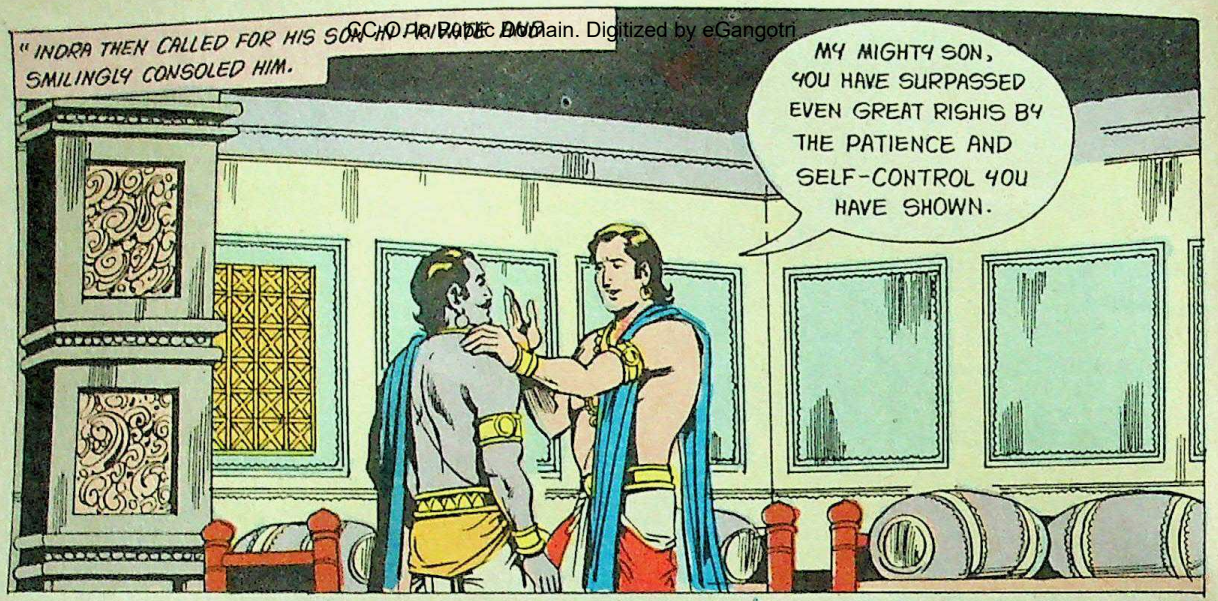

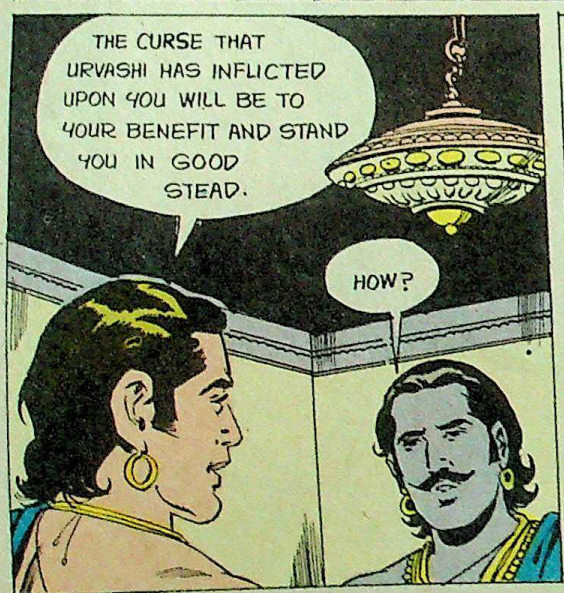

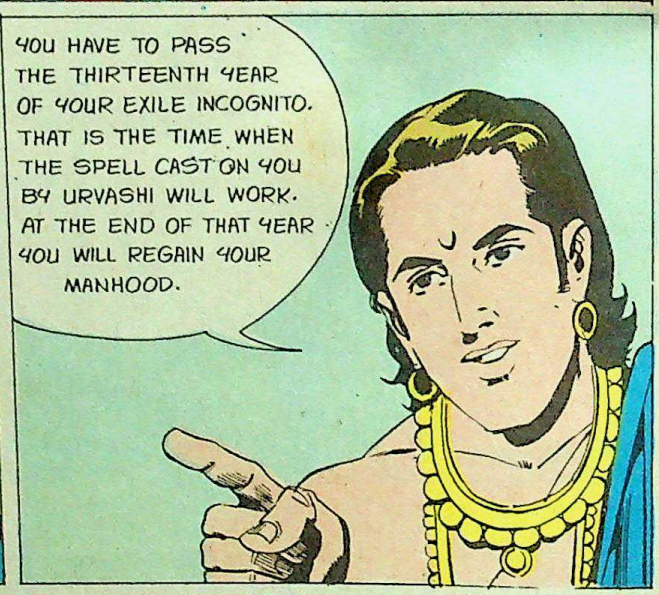

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O MONARCH, WHEN MEN LISTEN TO THIS STORY OF PURE CONDUCT AND SELF-CONTROL OF THE SON OF PANDU, THEY BECOME DEVOID OF CONCEIT AND HYPOCRISY AND LUST AND OTHER VICES.

"WHEN ARJUNA WAS STILL IN INDRALOKA, THE GREAT RISHI LOMASHA ARRIVED THERE IN THE COURSE OF HIS WANDERINGS.

"HE BOWED TO THE GREAT LORD.

"BUT SEEING ARJUNA SEATED ON INDRA'S THRONE, THE RISHI WONDERED...

WHAT ACTS OF MERIT HAS HE PERFORMED TO OCCUPY THE SEAT THAT IS WORSHIPPED BY THE GODS?

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"LORD INDRA PERCEIVED THE THOUGHTS OF LOMASHA AND SAID:

O BRAHMARSHI, ARJUNA IS NO MORTAL, THOUGH HE HAS BEEN BORN AMONG MEN.

HE IS BORN OF KUNTI WITH MY GRACE AND HE HAS COME HERE TO ACQUIRE SOME WEAPONS WHICH HE WILL USE TO CLEANSE THE EARTH OF ALL EVIL.

"O BRAHMANA, ARJUNA AND KRISHNA ARE NONE OTHER THAN NARA AND NARAYANA,* WHO HAVE BEEN BORN ON EARTH TO ENSURE THE PREVALENCE OF DHARMA.

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* NARA AND NARAYANA WERE GREAT SAGES WHO HAD BEEN BORN ON EARTH TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK OF THE GODS.

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"THEY LIVED IN THE SACRED ASYLUM OF BADARI AT THE MOUTH OF THE GANGA, AN ABODE WHICH EVEN GODS AND ILLUSTRIOUS RISHIS ARE NOT COMPETENT TO BEHOLD.

"THESE RISHIS AT MY BEHEST HAVE BEEN BORN ON EARTH TO RID HER OF ALL SIN. AND EXTERMINATE THE ASURAS * WHO LIVE IN THE NETHER WORLD.

"THESE ASURAS, STRENGTHENED BY BOONS, HAVE BECOME INVINCIBLE TO THE CELESTIALS...

"...AND ARE CAUSING US GREAT HARM.

*. DEMONS

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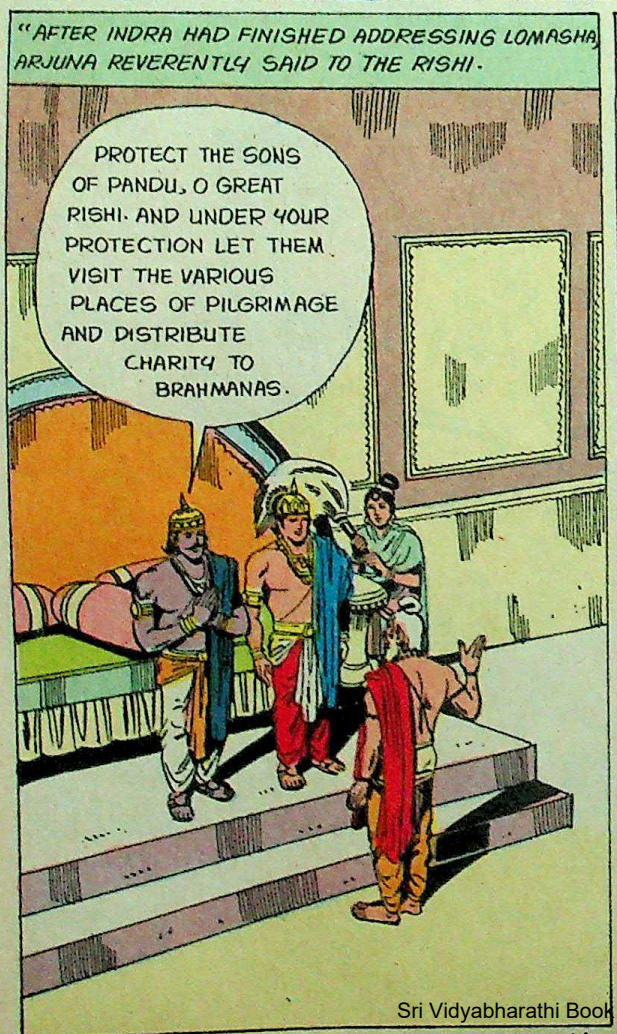

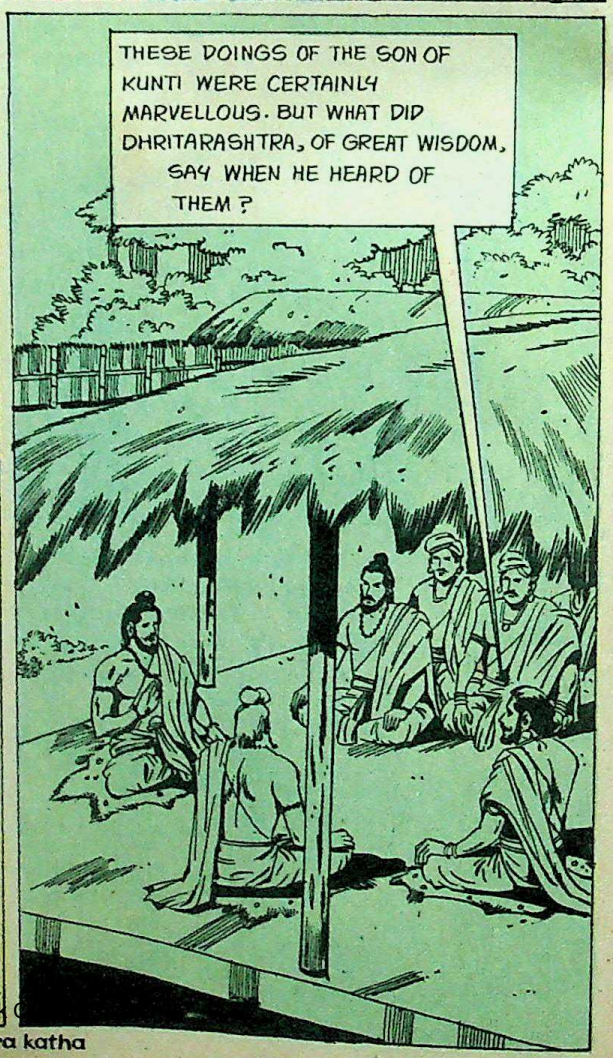

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MY SINFUL SONS ARE BENT UPON TREADING THE PATH OF SELF-DESTRUCTION. AND WANT TO FIGHT WITH THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS.

"SANJAYA SAID:

O KING, THE SONS OF PANDU ARE INDEED MIGHTY AND ARE FILLED WITH RAGE AT THE TREATMENT METED OUT TO THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI.

"DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE TO AVENGE THE INSULT, ARJUNA, AFTER MUCH ENDEAVOUR, HAS SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING THE BLESSINGS OF LORD SHIVA.

"AND PLEASED WITH THE DEVOTION OF ARJUNA EVEN THE LOKAPALAS* HAVE BLESSED HIM.

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 * A LOKAPALA IS THE GUARDIAN OF A QUARTER

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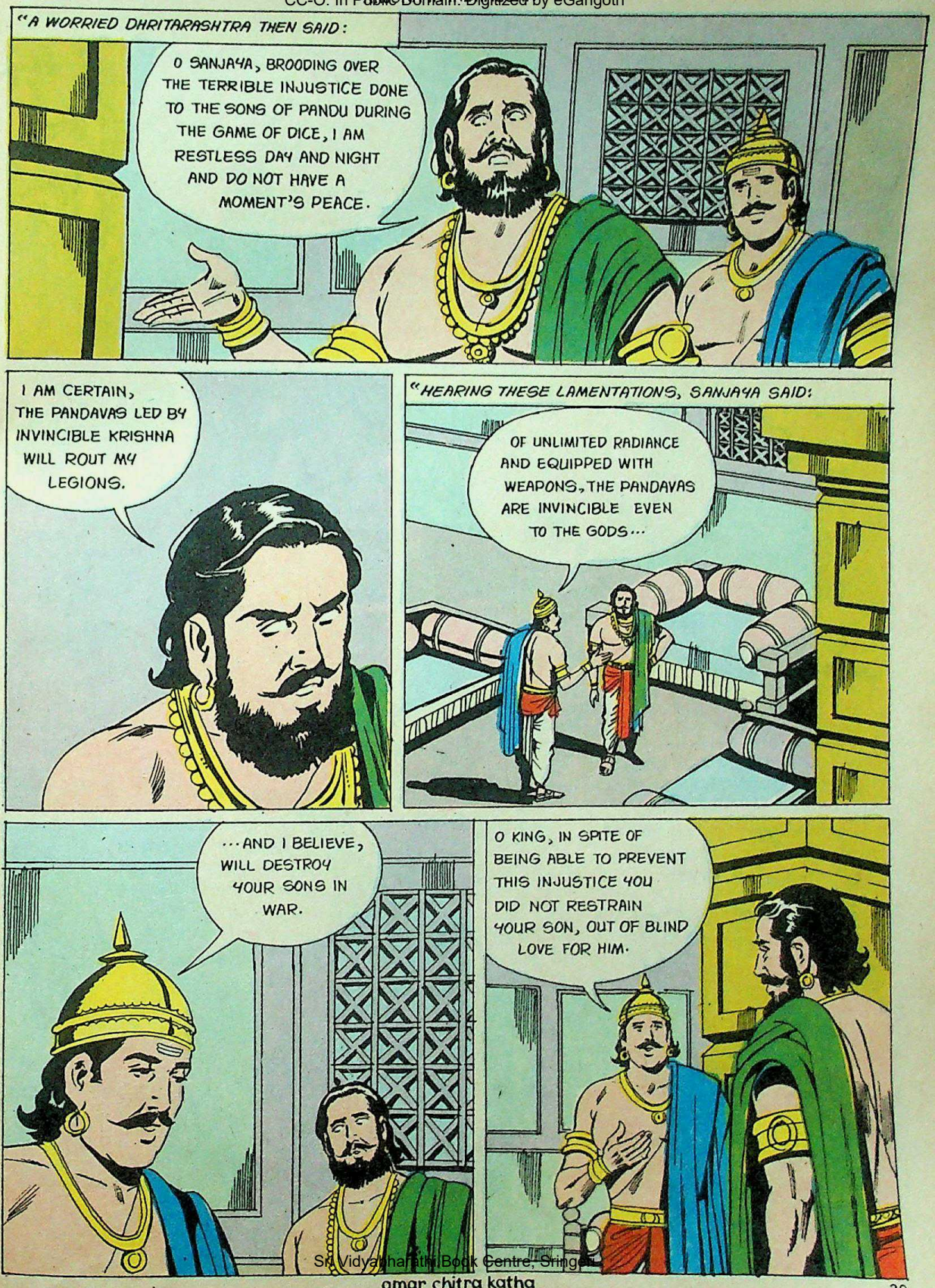

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AND KRISHNA ON HEARING OF THE DEFEAT OF THE PANDAVAS AT THE GAME OF DICE WENT TO THE KAMYAKA FOREST AND GAVE ASSURANCE TO THE SONS OF KUNTI.

"AND WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA APPROACHED KRISHNA IN THE FOREST TO BE THEIR CHARIOTEER AND GUIDE AT WAR, HE AGREED.

SO BE IT.

"YUDHISHTHIRA ACCEPTED KRISHNA'S WORDS, BUT —

PLEASE SLAY MY ENEMIES AT THE END OF OUR EXILE OF THIRTEEN YEARS. I HAVE PROMISED TO LIVE IN THE FOREST AND I WANT TO FULFIL THE PROMISE.

I SHALL SLAY THE ENEMY IN BATTLE AND RESTORE TO YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS YOUR WEALTH AND HASTINAPURA, FROM WHERE YOU WILL RULE THE EARTH.

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Let me tell you a story:

WHERE TO FIND HAPPINESS

My young friends,

Long, long ago, there lived a king called Shatanjaya. He had a beautiful and intelligent daughter—Suvasini.

When she came of age, the king searched far and wide for a suitable groom for his intelligent daughter. When he came across one such, he said to Suvasini, "The young man I have found for you is a brave warrior. He is expert in the use of weapons and has already won many battles."

Suvasini thought for a while and then said, "Father, he may be a great warrior, but how can he make me happy? He will be busy fighting battles and when he ascends the throne, he will worry about the security of his territory and his subjects. With so many responsibilities on his shoulders, how can he find time to make me happy?"

Shatanjaya renewed his search and then one day, again he spoke to Suvasini. "This young man has studied all the Vedas and the the Upanishads. He has practised austerities for many years."

"And he may continue to practise austerities even after marriage. Moreover, being a brahmin, he will have to depend for his livelihood on alms. How can a man beset with so many problems make me happy?" asked Suvasini.

After many days, again King Shatanjaya came across a suitable groom. He was a merchant's son. "He is the right man for you, Suvasini," said Shatanjaya. "He has traded with distant lands and and amassed much wealth.

"But, Father, he will continue to go to distant lands and will always remain worried about his trade and profits. How can such a man give me happiness?"

One day Sage Agastya came to meet Shatanjaya and the king told him his worry. Later, when Suvasini met Sage Agastya, he said, "Daughter, the notion that anyone else can make you happy is a wrong one. You can find your happiness in your efforts to make others happy; even from your thoughts of making others happy. Go, tell your father you will offer happiness and not seek it."

Needless to add, Suvasini married and learnt to be happy.

I have adapted this story from a previous issue of PARTHA. If you are fourteen and over, I invite you to read Partha the Self-Development Magazine, which I have devised to awaken the winner within you. You could subscribe to it at Rs. 48, and get a free copy of the book, "PARTHA WAY TO SUCCESS", costing Rs. 12.00. If Amar Chitra Katha and Tinkle are a few of your favourite things, I am sure you will enjoy reading Partha too.

Affectionately yours,

Anant Pai

Uncle Pai

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